

CHANGE AT THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

FROM JAILER TO TOP COP

Sheriff Lee Baca, who announced Tuesday he was retiring as Los Angeles County sheriff, served in the department for 48 years. Here is a look at some notable events of his career:

1965: Joins department as deputy trainee, goes to work in jail.

1971: Promoted to lieutenant.

1981: Sheriff Peter Pitchess appoints Baca as captain overseeing the Norwalk station.

1986: Sheriff Sherman Block promotes Baca to commander.

1992: Baca offers himself as a candidate to succeed LAPD Chief Daryl Gates.

1993: Baca receives doctorate in public administration from USC.

1997: Fails in second bid to become LAPD chief.

January 1998: Announces he is running for sheriff, challenging his onetime mentor Block.

October 1998: Block dies just days before the election, but his name remains on the ballot.

November 1998: Baca is elected sheriff.

2000: At his urging, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors creates the Office of Independent Review to help oversee department internal investigations.

2004: Supervisors seek a wide-ranging probe of Baca's jail operations after five inmate slayings in six months.

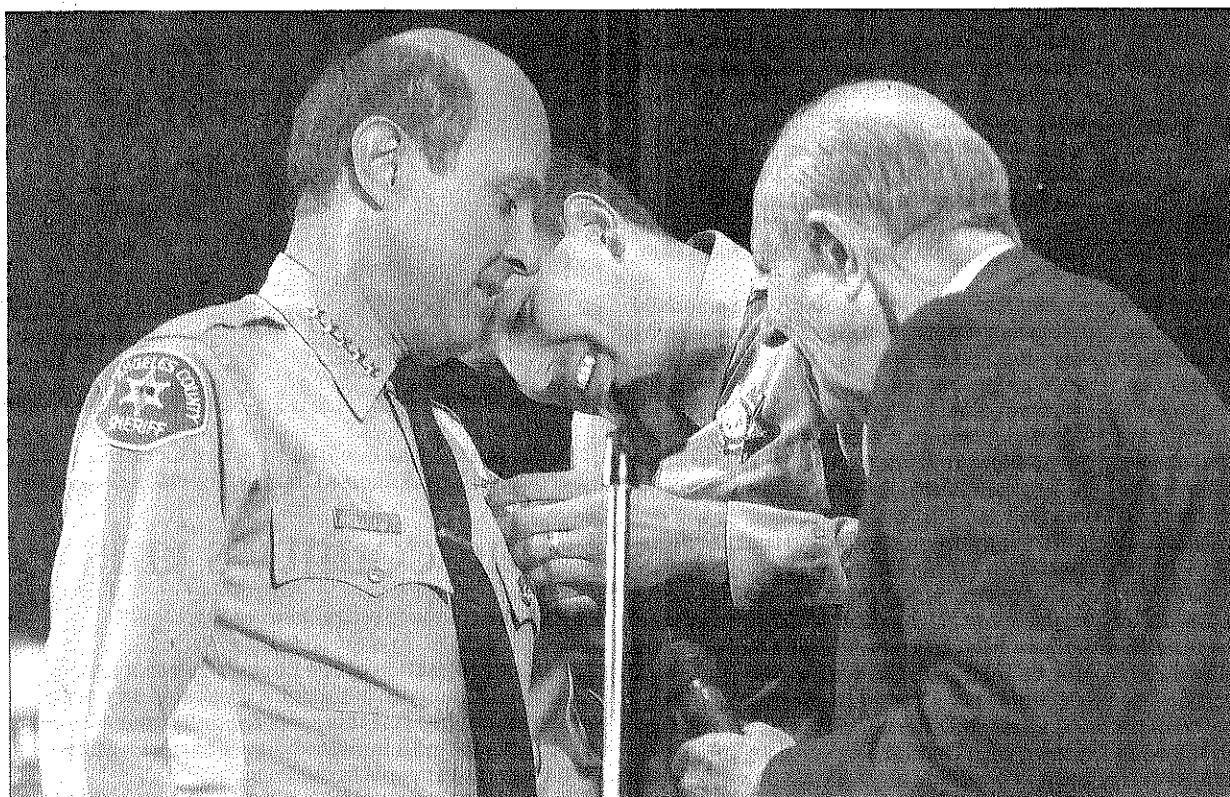
2010: Times reports instances of the Sheriff's Department intervening in cases involving Baca political donors.

June 2011: FBI investigation into allegations of deputy abuse in L.A. County jails becomes public.

September 2011: Times reveals that the FBI had an informant inside the jails.

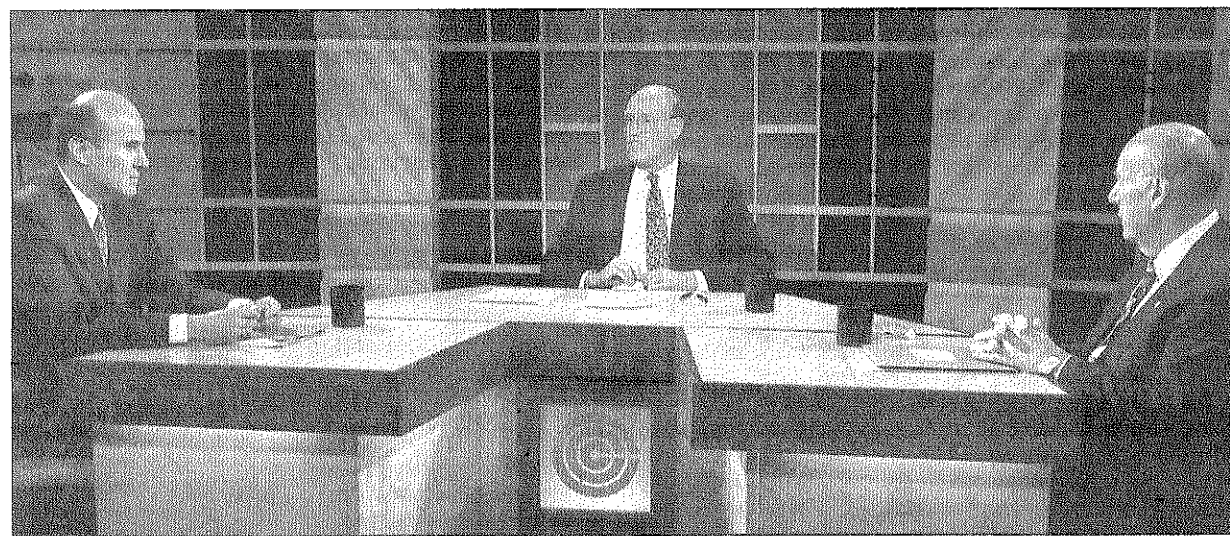
October 2011: Baca admits he was out of touch with problems in the jails and pledges reforms.

September 2012: A panel on jail abuse blasts Baca, cites "a failure of leadership," and he



Los Angeles Times

LEROY BACA, left, is sworn in as Los Angeles County sheriff Dec. 7, 1998, as his son David, a sheriff's deputy, pins the badge on him and former longtime Sheriff Peter Pitchess looks on during the ceremony at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium.



Los Angeles Times

BILL ROSENDAHL, center, moderates a debate between challenger Lee Baca, left, and Sheriff Sherman Block in August 1998 at the Century Communications studio in Santa Monica. Block died just days before the election that fall but his name remained on the ballot.

agrees to a long list of reforms.

December 2012: A federal grand jury probes whether Sheriff's Department hindered FBI inquiry into abuse by jailers.

January 2013: Baca announces homicides in his jurisdiction were at their lowest level since 1970.

March 2013: Baca's No. 2 Paul Tanaka quits after becoming focus of criticism amid federal probe of abuse of inmates. It is later revealed that Baca asked him to retire.

June 2013: U.S. Justice Department concludes that deputies harassed and intimidated blacks, Latinos and others in Antelope Valley with widespread unlawful detentions and searches.

Dec. 1, 2013: Times investigation finds that the Sheriff's Department hired dozens of officers even though background investigators found they had histories of serious misconduct.

Dec. 9, 2013: Federal authorities charge 18 current and former deputies in beatings of jail inmates and visitors, trying to intimidate an FBI agent and other crimes.

Dec. 18, 2013: Times investigation shows Baca maintained a special hiring program that granted preferential treatment to the friends and relatives of department officials, including some candidates who were given jobs despite having troubled histories. Baca's nephew was among those hired in the "Friends of the Sheriff" program even though sheriff's investigators noted that he had allegedly been involved in theft and a fight with San Diego police and had been arrested on suspicion of drunk driving and burglary.

Jan. 7, 2014: Baca announces retirement.

—Richard Winton

OPINION

EDITORIALS

Baca's welcome departure

The sheriff will step down after nearly 16 years. But more than a change at the top is needed.

AFTER MONTHS OF deepening federal investigations, damning news exposes and a scathing county commission report that decried his "failure of leadership," Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca finally took the hint Tuesday and announced that he would step down at the end of the month rather than seek a fifth four-year term. It's the right decision, and one we hope will enable the department to reverse some of Baca's many mistakes and begin to fix the many problems that have plagued it during his nearly 16-year tenure.

Baca's resignation will close the books on one man's political career, but the people of Los Angeles County must fight the temptation to end the discussion about the nearly unfettered power of the sheriff's office, the evidence of institutionalized thuggery in the jails and the urgent need for both a leader capable of revamping the nation's largest sheriff's department and a structural framework for vigorous oversight and lasting reform.

Make no mistake: Baca's tenure was troubled, to say the least, and his departure is welcome. Even during his first three terms, the quirky sheriff got himself into trouble by handing out official-looking law enforcement credentials to elected officials and financial supporters. He broke state law by appearing, in uniform, to endorse other candidates for office. No doubt there are political realities for an elected sheriff that police chiefs and other law enforcement officials can ignore, but Baca was all too comfortable with the campaign aspects of his office and repeatedly crossed the line of propriety.

Throughout his tenure there were lawsuits over the physical abuse of jail inmates, excessive force in the field and injuries caused by deputies driving drunk on duty. There were complaints about lazy or inept budget oversight, unwillingness or inability to crack down on secret deputy cliques and evidence of poor management.

Through it all, Baca paid lip service to a progressive vision of law enforcement and corrections, with a department of deputies committed to professionalism and respect for human rights, and a policy of education-based incarceration and mental health care that could make Los Angeles County jails a model for the nation. That vision, which Baca spoke of often, made him all the more maddening, because in practice his leadership fell so far from the standard that he himself set. It was often hard to tell if he really believed his talking points and just couldn't give them flesh or if, instead, they were lines designed merely for public consumption.

It was in his fourth and final term, to which he was elected without opposition in June 2010, that public scrutiny finally caught up with him. At issue was the degree to which sheriff's personnel felt free, or even

compelled, to use unnecessary force on inmates, and also whether Baca directed that conduct or was so out of touch as to be unaware of it. In 2012, the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence faulted him for inept management and asserted that if he were the chief executive of a private business instead of the elected sheriff of the nation's most populous county, he would have been fired.

In October, a jury found him personally liable in the 2009 beating of a jail inmate by deputies. In December, 18 deputies were criminally charged, some for conspiracy to obstruct a federal probe of the jail in an alleged department scheme to keep an informant from speaking to the FBI. Baca was not named, but U.S. Atty. Andre Birotte Jr. made it clear that the problems in the department were pervasive and that the investigation was ongoing.

Even the most honorable deputies in a department struggling with a corrupted culture need to know that the old ways will not be tolerated. They must see persistent attention paid to the department's problems, not the intermittent public focus that comes with elections or verdicts, or the occasional critique or initiative offered by the Board of Supervisors. Deputies must know they are working under a sheriff with the highest integrity, subject to a workable system of oversight.

Baca's departure will allow for a more sweeping revamp of the department. But county leaders and the public should not view a change at the top, by itself, as sufficient. Baca was a problem, but he was not the only problem. He may not have been up to the task of balancing politics and law enforcement, and he may have been too flawed or tired or incompetent to imbue his entire force of deputies with his stated vision, but for any Los Angeles County sheriff to do better in a strange job that combines electoral politics with jail management, mental health care, inmate rehabilitation and law enforcement, there must be a system of oversight that doesn't rely merely on federal probes and periodic elections.

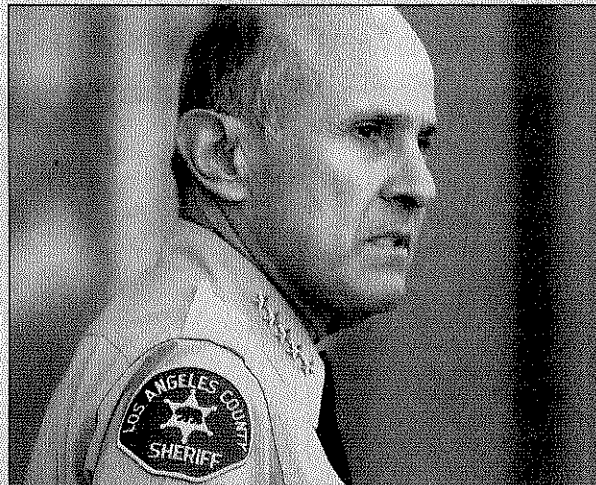
Exactly who the new sheriff will be and just how an effective oversight system will be structured should become the central debate of the sheriff's race over the coming year. Candidates should make clear not merely how they would eliminate inmate abuse and misconduct by deputies but how and where they would draw the line between their own independence as sheriff and their accountability for reform.

The Board of Supervisors, in the meantime, should focus on oversight but not control. It should consider an interim, short-term appointment as Baca's successor — someone who is committed to not running in the November election — and let candidates who are vying for a full term make their case to voters.

Next December, for the first time in a decade and a half, there will be a new sheriff in town. The people of Los Angeles County must have a chance to choose one with ability and integrity, who will serve under a workable system of oversight that prevents the kinds of abuses that reportedly took place under Baca from being repeated.

ION

LETTERS



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

LEE BACA has decided to retire as head of the troubled Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

The county's jails

Re "Baca plans to retire, sources say," Jan. 7

The resignation of Lee Baca as sheriff of Los Angeles County is, in theory, a great step forward in accountability. But this is not the end of our community's struggle to find a humane balance in the treatment of incarcerated people in our jails.

Inside Men's Central Jail, which the Sheriff's Department operates, scores of people languish in inhumane conditions. Fathers, sons, brothers and sisters (referring to transgender inmates) are warehoused in overcrowded dormitories and cell blocks. Access to fresh air and natural sunlight is scarce. The frigid temperatures inside often make people there sick.

I volunteered as a teacher at Men's Central Jail from 2012 to 2013, and I can imagine some of my former students smiling at the news of Baca's ignominious departure. But most, I'm sure, are still waiting and wondering if anything is ever going to change.

ALEX SHERMAN
Los Angeles

1-8-14

OP-ED

What comes after Baca

By Marc B. Haefele

THE 18 ACTING and former deputy sheriffs charged with federal crimes in connection with the running of the Los Angeles County jails have yet to stand trial. But whether or not they are convicted, the arrests make one thing perfectly clear: As presently structured, the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department jail division is a failed institution.

It's time to replace it with an institution that can at least be counted on to protect visitors and inmates from attacks by those responsible for guarding them.

Sheriff Lee Baca's announcement Tuesday that he won't seek another term is one step in the right direction. He has long demonstrated a near-complete inability even to slow the perceived rising violence and thuggery of many of the deputies assigned to custody duty. And he has seemed immune to shame, blaming problems in the department on a few "bad apples" every time problems came to light during his tenure.

ACLU head Hector Villagra sees it differently. "The entire tree may be rotten," he said. And if that's the case, simply replacing the man at the top won't get rid of the rotten wood.

The place to start with reforms is the jails, since they are at the



Los Angeles Times

L.A. COUNTY needs a new agency that would put a wall between two jobs of law enforcement: policing and custody.

heart of the entire department's culture. A deputy's first assignment out of the academy is usually to guard duty at the jails, and it can take years to get off that assignment and onto the streets. It is highly questionable, though, whether regulating convicted criminals in confinement is a suitable task for those trained to catch bad guys.

The late Sheriff Sherman Block, who held the job immediately before Baca, once told me he considered bossing around jail inmates to be the best possible training a deputy could have for dealing with the

general public. But can that philosophy fit with the modern doctrine of community policing?

The federal allegations raise a serious question. What kind of values are being instilled in the young men and women of the Sheriff's Department by working in a culture that allegedly condones violence by uniformed deputies and cover-ups from above?

This latest mess demands the reinvention of a system that just doesn't work. The county needs a new agency that would put a wall between what should be two separate functions of law enforcement:

policing and custody. A Los Angeles County Department of Corrections should take over the running of the jails under a corrections chief appointed by the Board of Supervisors. And the sheriff should stick to enforcing laws and apprehending criminals.

Some would argue that the whole idea of electing a sheriff should be scrapped. Other large counties in other states (for instance, New York's Nassau and Suffolk counties and Florida's Miami-Dade County) long ago replaced the office of sheriff — a literally medieval title originating before the Norman Conquest — with modern county police forces and separate corrections agencies.

But in California, Article II of the Constitution mandates that counties have "an elected sheriff." It would take a constitutional amendment to change that. The Constitution does not, however, require that the sheriff run the jails.

Accordingly, at least three of California's 58 counties have, for various reasons, established civilian corrections departments to run their jails. The oldest is Napa County's, established in 1975. The biggest county to establish a corrections department is Santa Clara, with a population of 1.8 million, which separated the two functions in 1987. Santa Clara's civilian jail agency originated with a ballot initiative pushed by then-county Supervisor (now U.S. Rep.) Zoe

Lofgren, and it was billed primarily as a cost-cutting measure.

The move reportedly failed to save money, and the county eventually returned most, but not all, of the correction department's responsibilities to the sheriff, saying it was more efficient in a time of limited resources and likely to reduce duplicative bureaucracy. In 2012, voters approved a measure that allowed county supervisors to apportion responsibility as it sees fit.

Government code currently mandates that, except in counties like Santa Clara, Madera and Napa that had civilian corrections departments before July 1993, "the sheriff shall be the sole and exclusive authority to keep the county jail." But the statute could be changed by a vote of the Legislature. The arrest of 18 deputies in Los Angeles, some of whom were led off in chains, makes clear that it should be.

Los Angeles County must be free to consider the obvious remedy to its long-troubled jail administration.

MARC B. HAEFELE covered the County of Los Angeles for the Metropolitan News Enterprise and the LA Weekly. He has reported on Argentina for the Boston Review, the Jewish Journal and the Argentine magazine Nomada and is a commentator on KPCC-FM (89.3).

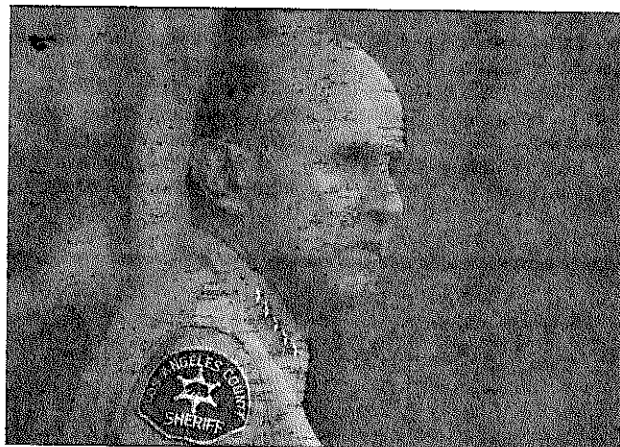
Baca is expected to retire

[Baca, from A1]
known candidates, avoiding head-to-head runoff elections. By 2010, no one bothered to challenge him.

During his career Baca advocated education and rehabilitation programs inside the county jails and reached out to the Muslim community after the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. But his tenure was also marked by periods of violence in the jails as well as overcrowding, which prompted the department to release inmates after serving only a fraction of their terms.

Recently, Baca, 71, was coping not just with the FBI probe but searing criticism of his leadership from a blue-ribbon commission appointed by the Board of Supervisors to examine allegations of jail abuses.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Justice accused sheriff's deputies of engaging in widespread unlawful searches of homes, improper detentions and unreasonable force as Antelope Valley authorities conducted a systematic effort to discriminate against African



ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

SHERIFF LEE BACA had faced a tough reelection battle amid scandals in the jails. He'd also come under increasing criticism from supervisors.

Americans who received low-income subsidized housing.

The two outside investigations portrayed a troubled department sharply at odds with the vision Baca preached during his 15 years as sheriff. More recently, The Times also reported that the department had hired dozens of officers in 2010 despite background investigations that found they had committed significant misconduct.

Doubts were growing that the previously popular sheriff would be able to win a fifth term as sheriff while facing a challenge from his former top aide, Paul Tanaka, and retired Cmdr. Bob Olmsted. Baca's decision to retire stunned many both inside and outside the Sheriff's Department.

Earlier on Monday, Baca had thrown his support behind

a proposal to set up an oversight commission for the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department.

Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina proposed setting up a permanent civilian oversight commission in September, after the U.S. Department of Justice announced that its civil rights division would investigate the treatment of mentally ill jail inmates in county custody.

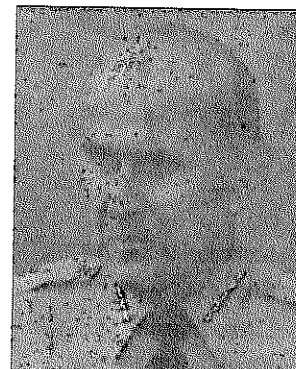
Baca publicly took a stance on the proposal in a statement declaring that such a commission would be "consistent with my view on strengthening transparency and accountability, and would serve to further develop law enforcement skills regarding constitutional policing, procedural justice, civil rights and human rights as a whole."

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Times staff writer Abby Sewell contributed to this report.

Baca plans to retire, sources say

Decision comes after criminal charges were filed against 18 current and former deputies. He won office in 1998.

BY ROBERT FATURECHI
AND JACK LEONARD



Los Angeles Times

SHERIFF LEE BACA has been facing criticism from many quarters.

Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, facing a tough battle for reelection amid scandals in his agency, plans to announce his retirement as soon as Tuesday, sources told The Times.

Baca told top officials in county government late Monday that he believes stepping down will help the department recover after several years of tumult and criticism, according to sources familiar with the conversations.

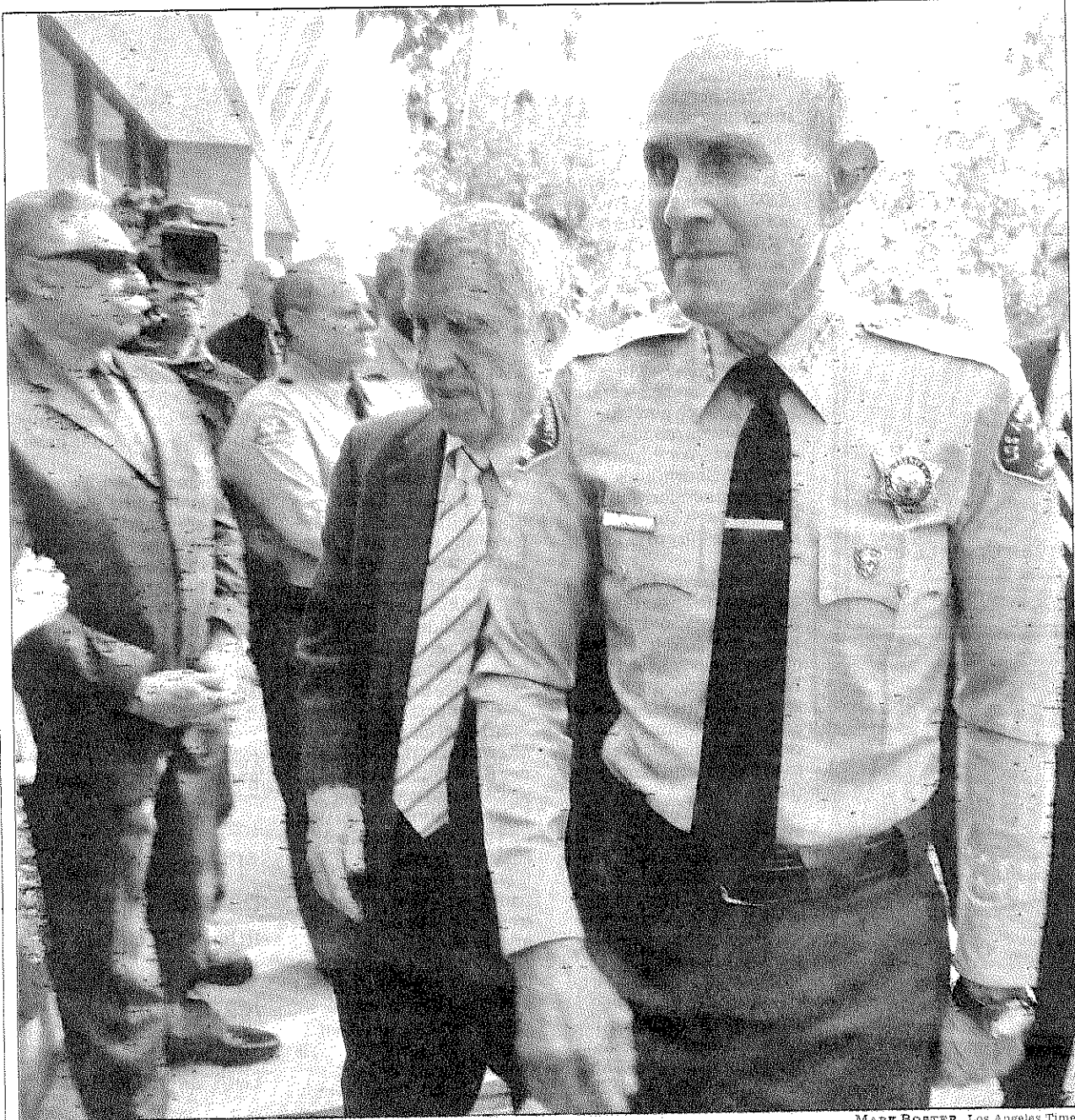
Baca's decision comes a month after federal prosecutors filed criminal charges against 18 current and former sheriff's deputies accused of beating jail inmates and visitors, trying to obstruct the FBI and other crimes following an investigation of corruption inside the nation's largest jail system.

Baca won office in 1998 after his rival, incumbent Sheriff Sherman Block, died days before the election. In the next three elections, Baca easily won in primaries against fields of lesser-

[See Baca, A8]

Sheriff's race thrown open

Baca's leaving may also complicate efforts to reform the department



MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF Lee Baca leaves a press conference after announcing his retirement at sheriff's headquarters in Monterey Park. "It was very shocking," Supervisor Gloria Molina said of his decision.

BY SEEMA MEHTA,
ABBY SEWELL AND
JACK LEONARD

Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca's surprise retirement announcement Tuesday upended the election campaign to lead the nation's largest sheriff's department and added new complexities to reform efforts after a series of scandals and an ongoing federal criminal probe. With Baca out of the race, the field of candidates is expected to widen in what will be the first sheriff's election without an incumbent in more than 50 years.

Immediately after Baca's announcement, one of his assistant sheriffs, Todd Rogers, declared his candidacy.

"My calling card will be 'Back to basics,'" said Rogers, a councilman in Lake-wood, who added that Baca had been poorly served by previous top managers. "There has been catastrophic failure of leadership in the Sheriff's Department."

Another assistant sheriff, James Hellmold, said he was also considering a run but has not made a decision.

"I am a crime fighter," he said. "I am not a politician."

Baca described both men as highly qualified to succeed him but stopped short of offering a formal endorsement.

Former Undersheriff Paul Tanaka and former Cmdr. Bob Olmsted had been considered the main challengers in the race. Retired Sheriff's Lt. Patrick Gomez and Los Angeles Police Det. Lou Vince are also running.

"You'll see a number of candidates come out now because the sheriff's not running," said Supervisor Don Knabe. "It changes the dynamics."

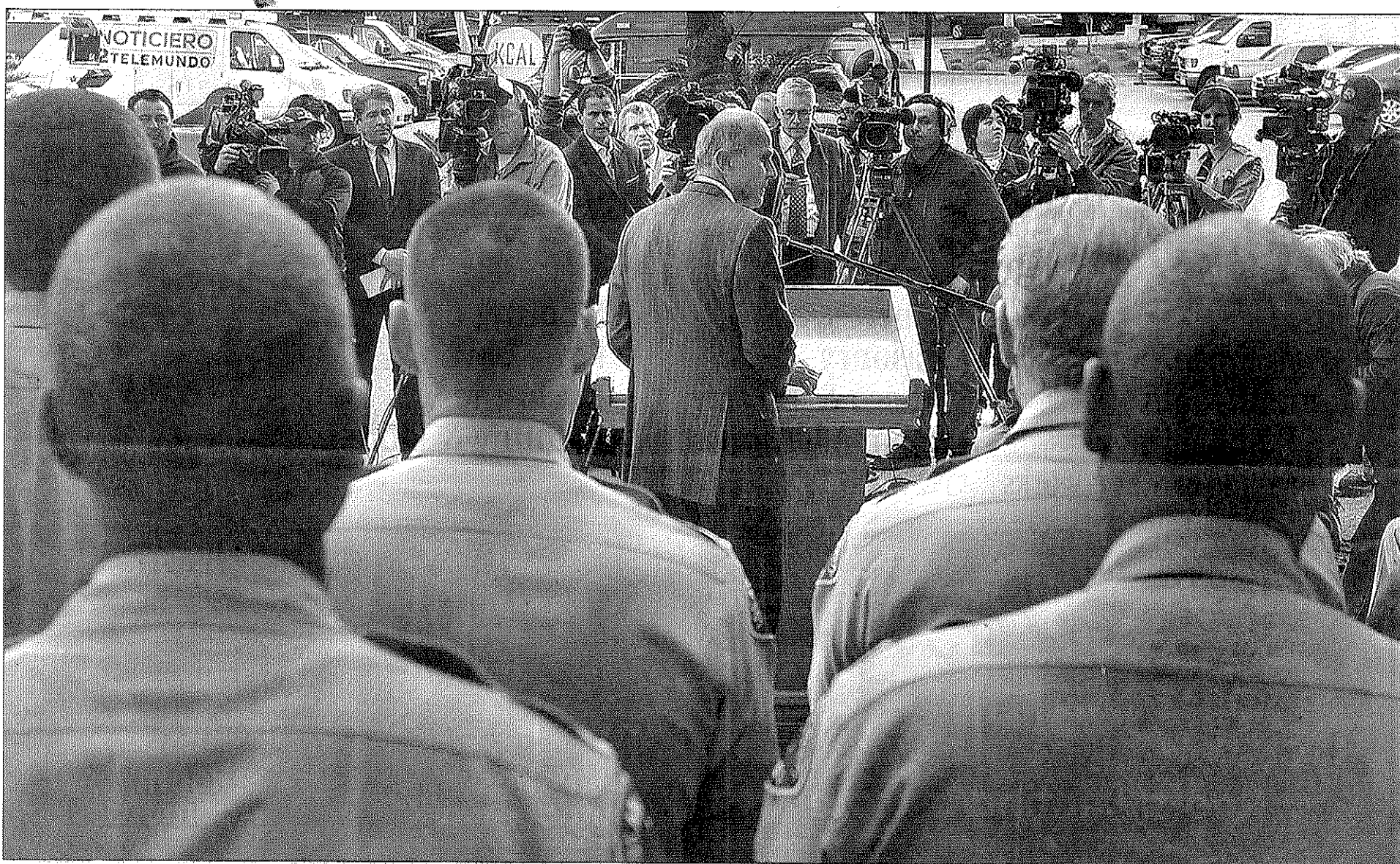
Sheriff hopefuls would have to move quickly. The deadline to enter the race is in March, and serious contenders will need to raise enough money to reach voters in a county of 10 million residents before the June primary.

One key question is whether the race will generate a strong candidate from outside the Sheriff's Department who cannot be tied to any of the agency's various problems.

Long Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell would fit that mold. McDonnell, who served as second in command to L.A. Police Chief William J. Bratton before moving to Long Beach, was one of seven members of a county commission that investigated allegations of excessive force against county inmates and faulted Baca's management of the jails. He weighed a run last year but

[See Baca, A14]

CHANGE AT THE SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT



CHRISTINA HOUSE For The Times

LAST MONTH, Baca faced the news media after the FBI announced criminal charges against 18 current and former sheriff's officials amid a jail corruption probe.

Reaction to news is mixed

[Baca, from A1] decided against challenging Baca, citing the difficulty in raising money to unseat an incumbent.

"I have been strongly encouraged to enter the race, and I am willing to give it a fresh look," McDonnell said Tuesday.

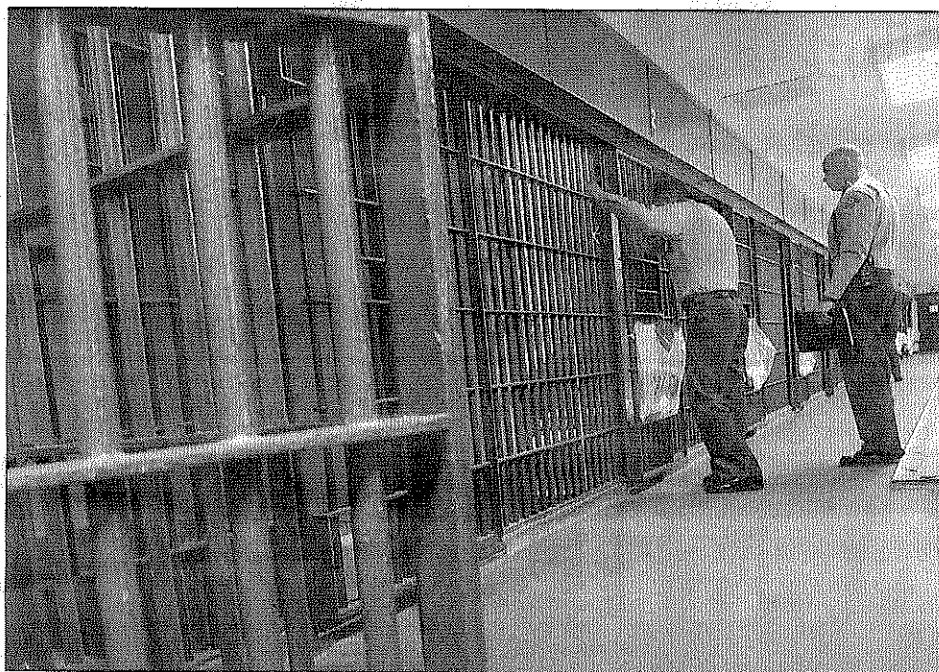
LAPD Deputy Chief Terry Hara, 56, said he too is weighing a bid.

Baca's exit also raises concerns about the fate of department reforms. He had expressed a commitment to cooperate with a new inspector general appointed by the Board of Supervisors to oversee his agency and this week endorsed a plan to set up a permanent civilian oversight commission.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky, who has opposed such a commission, said Tuesday that he thinks the department needs some sort of federal oversight to address "chronic structural problems."

Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas said he and his colleagues would move swiftly to select an interim department head who would be committed to increasing transparency and accountability until voters choose Baca's successor. Baca plans to step down at the end of the month, well before the June primary.

"The first order of business is to make sure that reform is institutionalized,"



LUIS SINCO Los Angeles Times

SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES check on inmates at Men's Central Jail. Deputies' conduct has been the subject of criticism as well as a federal investigation.

Ridley-Thomas said.

At a press conference announcing his retirement, Baca insisted his jails were safe and that his reforms aimed at reducing force against inmates were in place. He recommended that the Board of Supervisors pick his head of jails, Assistant Sheriff Terri McDonald, to temporarily run the department until a permanent successor is elected.

McDonald, previously a top official for the state's prison system, joined the

Sheriff's Department last year after the blue-ribbon county commission recommended hiring an outside custody expert to run the county's jails.

Baca's voice cracked as he told reporters he was stepping down after more than 15 years as sheriff. He said he wanted to spare his department more negative publicity during the election campaign and give others a chance to run that they would not take if he was a candidate.

"I will go out on my terms," Baca said.

He said he had held fast to the department's core values, including a commitment to perform duties with "respect for the dignity of all people." He listed his greatest accomplishments as the historic drop in crime the county has experienced over more than a decade and his efforts to help educate jail inmates. About 8,500 of the county's inmates are receiving educational services behind bars, he said.

"The greatest thing I can do is to take people who cause crime and then prevent them from doing it again," Baca said.

But he has also faced a steady onslaught of criticism.

Last year, the U.S. Department of Justice accused sheriff's deputies of engaging in widespread unlawful searches of homes, improper detentions and unreasonable force as Antelope Valley authorities conducted a systematic effort to discriminate against African Americans who received low-income subsidized housing. The county's blue-ribbon commission found troubling evidence of excessive force by deputies against inmates and sharply criticized Baca's leadership.

In December, federal prosecutors announced criminal charges against 18 current and former sheriff's officials accused of beating jail inmates and visitors, trying to obstruct the FBI and other crimes, after an investigation of corruption inside the nation's largest jail system.

Baca also came under fire after The Times reported that his department had hired dozens of officers who background investigators determined had serious histories of misconduct.

Still, the 71-year-old sheriff had continued to attend political fundraisers and was expected to wage a

fierce battle for a fifth term.

"It was very shocking," Supervisor Gloria Molina said of Baca's decision to retire.

A frequent critic of the sheriff, Molina said she thought Baca did not move quickly enough to crack down on problems within the department and had "trusted people a little more than he should.... I think there was a second tier of management that had tremendous problems."

The sheriff's announcement that he was stepping down drew mixed reactions around the county.

LAPD Chief Charlie Beck told reporters that Baca was a "friend and mentor" who would be remembered as a great sheriff. Mayor Eric Garcetti described Baca's decision as "the right move for himself and for his department."

The American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California said in a statement that his "departure provides an important opportunity for new leadership to do what Sheriff Baca was either unable or unwilling to do: acknowledge and confront the institutional problems in the department."

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Times staff writers Richard Winton, Joel Rubin and Kate Mather contributed to this report.

Baca's vexing decision

The sheriff wondered whether his departure would help the rank-and-file

1-8-14

By ROBERT FATURECHI

Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca had something on his mind Friday and needed some advice. He summoned a top aide to his office and let him in on a secret: Baca was thinking about stepping down.

The sheriff's leadership was under attack after a string of scandals. He faced the prospect of a nasty reelection bid. But most of all, Baca said, he wondered whether his departure would help the rank-and-file move beyond the controversies of the last few years.

The aide, who got his start as Baca's driver and owed the sheriff for his rise, did not try to dissuade his boss from retiring. Rather, he told him it was time to move on.

"I told the sheriff I was getting feed-

back from deputies on the front line that there's a lot of negativity, and they felt like it was impacting their ability to do their work," Assistant Sheriff Jim Hellmold said. "It was a good decision for him to step down."

Baca continued to mull over what to do over the weekend.

By Monday, he had made up his mind. The sheriff pulled his top assistants out of their offices one by one and told them.

He was done.

He called his campaign consultant and relayed the same message. That evening, Baca broke the news to the county Board of Supervisors.

Baca made it official Tuesday morning in an emotional, and at times nostalgic, news conference in which he talked of his 48 years in the Sheriff's

[See Advice, A14]



CAROLYN COLE Los Angeles Times

LEE BACA in November 1998, when he was first elected sheriff.

Baca's career spanned 48 years

Lee Baca started in 1965 as a deputy trainee in the jail and will leave an agency that grew into the largest sheriff's department in the nation. **A15**

'It's the public's department, not mine'

1-8-14

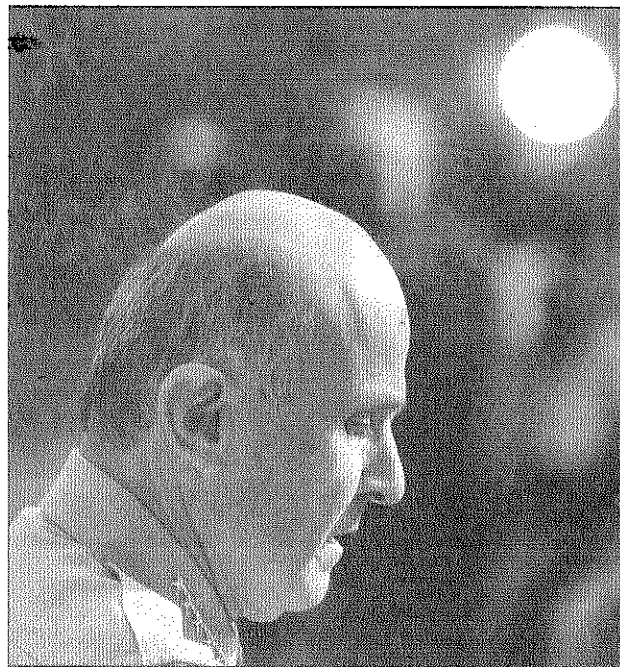
[Advice, from A1]
Department.

"I don't see myself as part of the future," said Baca, 71. "I see myself as part of the past."

His retirement comes after a grueling few years in which his department faced multiple federal investigations involving allegations of abusive deputies and racially biased policing. Baca was accused of negligent management and allowing a culture of favoritism and lax discipline.

The scrutiny of his leadership became more intense last month when 18 of his deputies were charged by federal authorities as part of a jail abuse investigation. (Baca has said he has been assured he is not a target of the federal probe.)

Meanwhile, a Times investigation into the agency's hiring practices found that dozens of officers were given jobs even after background investigators found they had histories of serious misconduct. The newspaper also reported that some job applicants received special treatment because they were



MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

'I don't see myself as part of the future. I see myself as part of the past.'

L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF LEE BACA,
on announcing his retirement

friends and relatives of department employees.

The sheriff took some blame for the problems but also publicly faulted his underlings, which in turn cost him some support internally. Several top aides who stood behind him during his farewell address Tuesday had privately been acknowledging they had lost confidence in their boss.

"Long time coming," one said before Baca's news conference.

In recent months, some sheriff's officials described a malaise hanging over the department's headquarters amid the onslaught of scandal and investigations.

But this fatigue did not make Baca's announcement any less startling to those who know him. Being sheriff was Baca's life, people around him have said, his free time filled with ribbon-cuttings, neighborhood meetings and other community events. Baca would readily give his phone number to members of the public and take their calls at all hours.

The thinking was that

Baca enjoyed being sheriff too much to ever leave office on his own accord.

"He cares deeply about being sheriff," said one member of Baca's command staff. "When you know him personally, you know it's very important to him. It showed how serious he was to say, 'You know what, I'm putting the department first.'"

Baca's political consultant, Parke Skelton, said he was taken aback when Baca broke the news to him at his Pasadena office Monday. Baca, he said, had previously been committed to fighting for reelection.

"It was clear that he had thought long and hard about it," Skelton said. "I didn't feel that it was up to me to persuade him otherwise."

Skelton said the sheriff told him he didn't believe that a highly contentious reelection campaign was in the best interest of the department or himself. He also didn't appear to have the stomach for a vicious reelection battle.

In 1998, Baca had seemed

uncomfortable with the idea of attacking the then-incumbent, Sheriff Sherman Block.

After forcing a runoff, Baca at one point appeared to consider dropping out before rallying and winning the election after his rival died just days before the election.

"He's never been enthusiastic about politics as a blood sport," Skelton said.

With three former subordinates already in the race, and more possibly in the fold, Baca could have faced a brutal reelection battle.

Instead, he chose to leave office by the end of the month.

At his news conference, Baca focused on his accomplishments, such as reducing crime, promoting ethnic and religious tolerance and providing prisoners with educations.

But he also said he regretted anything he did to tarnish the department's reputation.

"It's the public's department," he said, "not mine."

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Social workers' strike having lasting effects on foster care

Delays in court cases, poor communication with families still occur a month later.

By SEEMA MEHTA
AND ABBY SEWELL

Last month's strike by Los Angeles County public employees, their first in more than a decade, was short-lived. But the effects are still being felt by some families entangled in the foster care system.

Anthony Rogers flew to Los Angeles from North Carolina for a Dec. 13 custody hearing involving his 15-month-old grandson, who had been placed in protective care after his son had an altercation with the child's mother. Rogers and his wife had been in regular communication with social workers about caring for the child. They had prepared a room in their home, bought Christmas presents and arranged for a nanny.

But when Rogers arrived in court — two days after social workers ended their walkout — he said he learned the case had to be continued until sometime in

L.A. COUNTY child-welfare workers march outside the Department of Children and Family Services' office in downtown L.A. on Dec. 5 during a six-day strike.

the New Year because of paperwork backups caused by the strike.

"They never told us they were going on strike," Rogers said of the social workers he had been in contact with.

Rogers, 51, spent nearly \$2,000 on airfare, a hotel, a rental car and food during the trip, and did get to spend

an hour with his grandson, holding him for the first time, before flying home. But the couple had to give up hope of having the child home for Christmas.

The county's Department of Children and Family Services doesn't comment on specific cases, but the law firm representing the child

confirmed the case was continued because a report wasn't filed by the department.

Family services spokesman Armand Montiel said the department and the court "take continuances very seriously" and that "social workers and managers

[See Strike, AA2]



MEL MELCON Los Angeles Times

Effects of strike still being felt

[Strike, from AA1]
are working to minimize the impact of continuances experienced during the work action."

County social workers are part of Service Employees International Union Local 721, the county government's largest bargaining group, and went on a six-day strike in December, after working without a contract for more than two months. Sticking points for a deal included social worker caseloads and the timing of a 6% raise for all of the union's 55,000 members. A tentative deal calls for 450 child-welfare employees to be hired and caseloads to be trimmed. The raise issue remains unresolved.

A union spokesman said that although services were affected during the strike, foster children will be safer and their families will receive better service in the long run because of promised smaller caseloads.

"Nobody wanted to go on strike," said SEIU spokesman Lowell Goodman, but social workers felt the "short-term harm" caused by the work action was worth the systemic improvements county officials have agreed to make.

The Rogers' grandchild will be the subject of a hearing Monday; many cases like the Rogers' have been postponed to February or later.

Leslie Heimov, executive director of the Children's Law Center of California, which represents children in such cases, said the strike caused a ripple effect of delay through the child-welfare and family court system that is still being felt.

"Kids who were supposed to be in court weren't brought to court because transportation wasn't arranged," she said. "There were certainly delays of every type and cases postponed, which at the end of the day means kids staying in foster care perhaps when they don't have to be there."

A count of children affected by strike-related continuances wasn't available, but Supervising Judge Margaret S. Henry estimated that during the strike and in the days following, four or five hearings a day per courtroom were continued be-

cause of the walkout.

"We had a ... lot of disruption, and a lot of unhappy parties and children," Henry said as social workers returned to their jobs.

But she said there is optimism that "we've turned a corner; there will be more social workers, things will be better."

Some families experienced shorter-term but unnerving disruptions during the strike.

Kim Meiser, 51, a grandmother of twin babies in foster care, said her daughter was unable to schedule her weekly visitation and for three days didn't know where one of the babies had been taken. The child's foster mother called Meiser's daughter to say someone

'We had a ... lot of disruption, and a lot of unhappy parties and children.' But 'there will be more social workers, things will be better.'

— MARGARET HENRY,
supervising judge

named "Sal" picked up the baby girl, but she did not know where they had gone, Meiser said.

The children's social worker was out because of the strike, and other DCFS staffers were unable to explain what had happened, Meiser said. Meiser's daughter waited at a Glendora child-welfare office three days in a row, until she was told her child had been placed with a different foster family in Montclair, Meiser said.

Meiser said she supported the strikers' demands, but said children shouldn't have been placed "in limbo" during the strike. The children's social worker could not be reached for comment.

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Child abuse case prompts suit

1-6-14
Alleged victim's
grandparents accuse 4
L.A. County agencies
of wrongdoing.

BY GARRETT THEROLF

The grandparents of a fatally injured 8-year-old Palmdale boy, whose history of alleged physical abuse has prompted a sweeping review of Los Angeles' child-welfare system, have sued, accusing officials of missing repeated opportunities to save the child.

The complaint naming

the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services asserts that more than 60 reports of abuse involving Gabriel Fernandez were lodged with the agency. But only five to eight investigations were initiated, the suit says, and none of those met the department's own requirements for thoroughness.

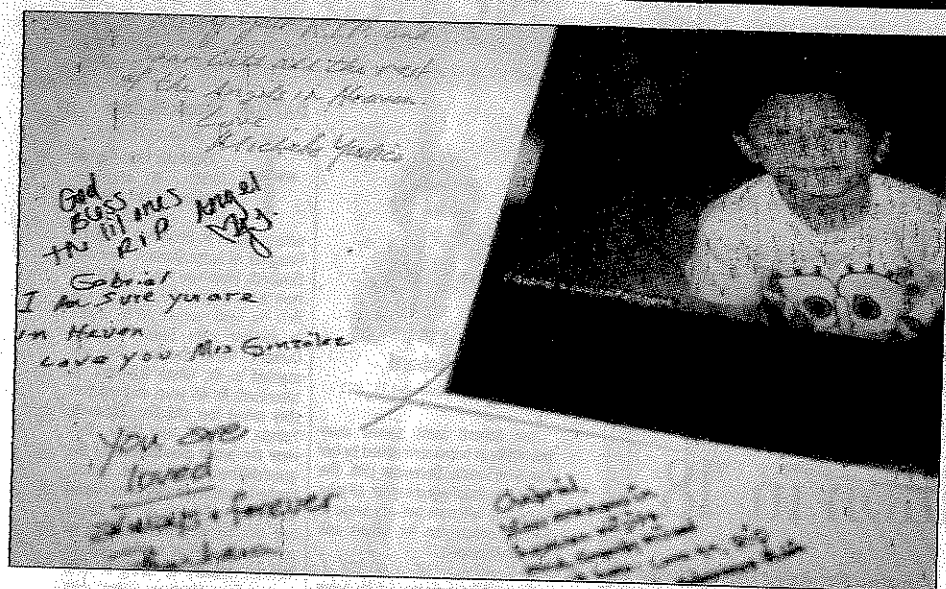
Also named as defendants in the case are the Palmdale School District, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Social Services and the Sheriff's Department. Gabriel's maternal grandparents, who cared for the boy for much of

his early life until he was returned to his mother over the couple's objections, allege that each agency mishandled information regarding Gabriel's abuse.

The suit, seeking unspecified damages, alleges wrongful death, civil rights violations and intentional infliction of emotional distress.

"It's just a horrific, unimaginable situation for them," said Jennifer Smith, a lawyer for the grandparents. "They are getting some satisfaction that Gabriel will get a voice through this court action."

[See Abuse, AA6]



GINA FERRAZZI Los Angeles Times

TRIBUTES to Gabriel Fernandez — a Palmdale boy who was allegedly fatally beaten by his mother's boyfriend — were written for his June memorial service.

Child abuse case prompts lawsuit

[Abuse, from AA1]

A spokesman for the Department of Children and Family Services declined to comment on the suit.

Gabriel's mother and her boyfriend were charged with murder after paramedics responded to the family's home last spring and found Gabriel with signs of extensive abuse, including a fractured skull, three broken

ribs and BB pellets embedded in his lung and groin.

The lawsuit comes after a county review of the case found repeated breakdowns in monitoring Gabriel's care and failures to follow up on complaints and warnings that the boy was being mistreated. The county subsequently moved to fire four social workers involved in

the case and created a commission of experts to examine child protection programs and recommend reforms. The panel is expected to deliver its findings later this year.

The grandparents' lawyer said far-reaching changes are needed. "Many of the people involved in this case are good people trying to do their job," she said. "But it's a systemic problem that starts at the top."

The suit alleges the department routinely conducts incomplete investigations and makes arbitrary decisions about whether to remove children because social workers are overwhelmed by excessive case loads.

It alleges county social workers failed to interview Gabriel privately and examine him fully.

According to child-welfare records released to The Times as the result of a court order, Gabriel's mother acknowledged her mental illness, a history of alcohol and drug dependency, and that she had discontinued counseling and used a belt to discipline him.

Social workers wrote that she provided physical care "consistent with child's needs," the records show.

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OPIN

EDITORIALS

1-2-14

The untouchable sheriff?

Oversight, even without authority to fire or discipline, could instigate departmental change.

THERE CAME A POINT during the 2012 hearings of the Los Angeles County Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence when the panel's lead counsel, Richard Drooyan, asked Sheriff Lee Baca how he was to be held to answer for mistreatment of inmates, poor supervision of his jail deputies and in fact everything that goes wrong at the Sheriff's Department.

"Don't elect me," Baca answered.

In that simple statement the sheriff put his finger on the sharpest theoretical check on his considerable power, yet paradoxically his most effective shield against ever actually being held to account to anyone for his performance. As the sheriff, he answers to the voters of his county — and to virtually no one else.

Yet most voters don't track the sheriff except in the most general sense, and they seldom are faced with a capable and viable alternative on election day. By being accountable to everyone, the sheriff is in a real sense accountable to no one.

And sometimes the sheriff can thwart even the voters' attempt to rein him in. In 2002, when Los Angeles County voters adopted term limits — a maximum of three four-year terms for every county elected official — Baca went to court, arguing correctly that sheriffs' terms are set by the state Constitution and that county voters are powerless to limit him in any way other than selecting a different candidate on election day. He prevailed; the term limits measure now applies to Los Angeles County supervisors but not the sheriff (or the district attorney or assessor).

It's an odd system. The sheriff leads a paramilitary agency of uniformed law enforcement officers with the authority to arrest and use deadly force. But unlike his city counterparts — police chiefs who must report to mayors, city councils or oversight commissions, and sometimes all three — the sheriff labors under no real oversight at all. He wears a badge but is, in fact, a politician. He need never appear at a Board of Supervisors hearing or send the supervisors a report unless he deems it in his interest to do so. The board's formal power over him covers only his budget; yet the board must govern the county and pay its bills, including millions of dollars in liabilities racked up by deputies who wrongfully injure people, whether by driving while intoxicated or beating up inmates or many misdeeds in between.

That structure of an independently elected sheriff has been at the heart of the board's quandary in the wake of the jail violence revelations and the investigation, hearings and scathing report by the commission, as well as the civil damage awards against jail supervisors and, now, the federal indictment and arrest of 18 deputies on charges that include obstruction of justice.

If the board can't order the sheriff to do (or not do) anything, what's the use of appointing someone to investigate problems in his department and report on them to the board?

Unlike the structure of the Los Angeles Police Department, where the mayor can fire the chief, and where an inspector general has the power to subpoena witnesses, compel production of documents and re-

port directly to the Police Commission — which at least on paper is the head of the department and has the authority to recommend against a second term for the chief — layers of ersatz oversight at the Sheriff's Department rely on the sheriff's cooperation. The various authorities report to no one with power to discipline or remove the sheriff.

One of Baca's predecessors agreed to an in-house ombudsman to take public complaints, but amid years of reports about abuses by jail guards and patrol deputies, the ombudsman was barely a factor in bringing problems to light. An Office of Independent Review reports to the board on the Sheriff's Department and other agencies, but its scope is limited to critiquing the department's own investigations of alleged officer misconduct. It is dependent on the sheriff's cooperation.

The Board of Supervisors hired a consultant to write periodic reports on the Sheriff's Department's performance and to recommend improvements in policies and procedures. That has been helpful in illuminating problems in the department, but the consultant can only recommend. It's up to the sheriff to implement — or not.

Now, following a recommendation by the jail violence commission, the board has appointed prosecutor Max Huntsman to the new post of inspector general to provide independent oversight and monitoring of the department. But the comparison to the LAPD's inspector general is only partly apt; Huntsman, like the previously assigned layers of oversight, will report to the Board of Supervisors, which will have no power to remove the sheriff or to recommend discipline to anyone.

Supervisors Mark Ridley-Thomas and Gloria Molina are calling for yet another layer: a commission to oversee the Sheriff's Department, roughly parallel to the Police Commission atop the LAPD. But, again, the parallel is imperfect. The Police Commission is part of a carefully structured complex of civilian oversight, engrafted into the City Charter, that balances various powers but ultimately puts the police chief under the authority of the mayor and commission. A sheriff's commission could have no real oversight beyond that which the independently elected sheriff is willing to surrender.

Just as with term limits, the sheriff is shielded by the state Constitution from oversight. Los Angeles voters should seriously consider asking their fellow Californians to join them in amending that document to provide a more effective check on the sheriff's power.

In the meantime, though, the Board of Supervisors should recall that it appointed the jail violence commission, and although that panel had no actual authority to discipline or remove the sheriff, it was far from ineffectual. It provided a forum and a focus for critique of the sheriff and his department, and its recommendations form the basis of a revamp of the department's operations. That's a signal that a more permanent oversight commission might well have a constructive role, even if its powers don't parallel the Police Commission's.

As Huntsman begins his work, the supervisors must decide whether he is to report to them along with the dozens of other counsels and department directors who compete for the board's attention; or instead to a commission that, without disciplinary authority, could nevertheless have the power to scrutinize the sheriff's performance and direct him toward constructive change.

More sheriff hires broke rules

1-4-14

Department finds 15 cases, far more than first known, in which workers added in 2010 were disciplined.

By Robert Faturechi

The Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department has identified 15 cases in which employees who got jobs during a controversial mass hiring in 2010 went on to be disciplined for violating department rules, according to a new report by the agency.

The report comes a month after The Times reported that the Sheriff's Department hired dozens of officers even though background investigators concluded that they had committed serious misconduct, including falsifying records, stealing and soliciting prostitutes.

The Times found that at least three of those employees faced new accusations of misconduct after joining the department. The new sheriff's report indicates the problems are more extensive than initially believed.

The misconduct findings resulted in suspensions, reprimands and in one case, a deputy retiring in lieu of being punished, the department report said. Of the 15 cases, 13 involved sworn deputies and the other two involved non-sworn officials.

Nearly a dozen additional misconduct investigations involving employees hired in 2010 are still pending, officials said.

The study, which was submitted to the Board of Supervisors this week, marks the first time that Sheriff Lee Baca has acknowledged that some of those hires committed new wrongdoing in his department.

The report did not detail the instances of misconduct. The Times reported that one of the hires was forced out after firing his service weapon during a dispute outside a fast-food restaurant. Another was investigated for allegedly stealing thousands of dollars in overtime funds.

The employees were among about 280 officers hired from a small county police force called the Office of Public Safety that patrolled county facilities and parks. The OPS was disbanded as a cost-savings measure, with the Sheriff's Department taking over its responsibilities.

The Sheriff's Department was not required to hire any of the officers. Sheriff's investigations found many had problems in their backgrounds, but department brass hired them anyway.

In the wake of The Times' [See Sheriff, A9]

LATIMES.COM

Los Angeles Times

Sheriff discloses 15 cases of discipline against 2010 hires

[Sheriff, from A1] report, the Sheriff's Department has admitted that 84 of the OPS hires should not have been given jobs. Of the 84, the new report said, three have since violated department rules.

The study found that 28 of the 199 OPS officers hired as deputies have been the subject of administrative investigations, with five of them being investigated more than once.

Assistant Sheriff Todd Rogers said Wednesday that the percentage of former OPS officers who had been disciplined seemed high to him, but he did not have the department-wide average to compare it with.

"Any misconduct is cause for concern," he said. "It's always cause for concern."

The Times' investigation found that for nearly 100 OPS officers hired, investigators discovered evidence of dishonesty, such as making untrue statements. At least 15 were caught cheating on the department's own polygraph exams, hiring records show. Twenty-nine of those given jobs previously had been fired or pressured to resign from other law enforcement agencies over concerns about misconduct or workplace performance problems.

One of the new hires admitted kissing and groping a 14-year-old girl when he was 28. Another was forced out of the Los Angeles Police Department after lying to a supervisor. A third admitted to using her service weapon to shoot at her husband as he ran away from her.

In response, the Board of Supervisors demanded answers from Baca. The sheriff acknowledged that the agency's hiring standards were violated but said that he had delegated the authority for making the hiring decisions to his undersheriff

at the time, Larry Waldie. Waldie has told The Times that he was under pressure from county officials to hire as many former county police officers as possible.

Sheriff's officials promised swift changes, and have been considering their options. A high-ranking department official had previ-

ously said the agency considered terminating some of the problem deputies but probably wouldn't be able to legally fire anyone for misconduct because sheriff's officials knew about the misconduct when they hired them. What's more realistic, he said, is moving the problem hires to less sensitive po-

sitions, giving them more training and putting them on administrative monitoring to limit future misconduct.

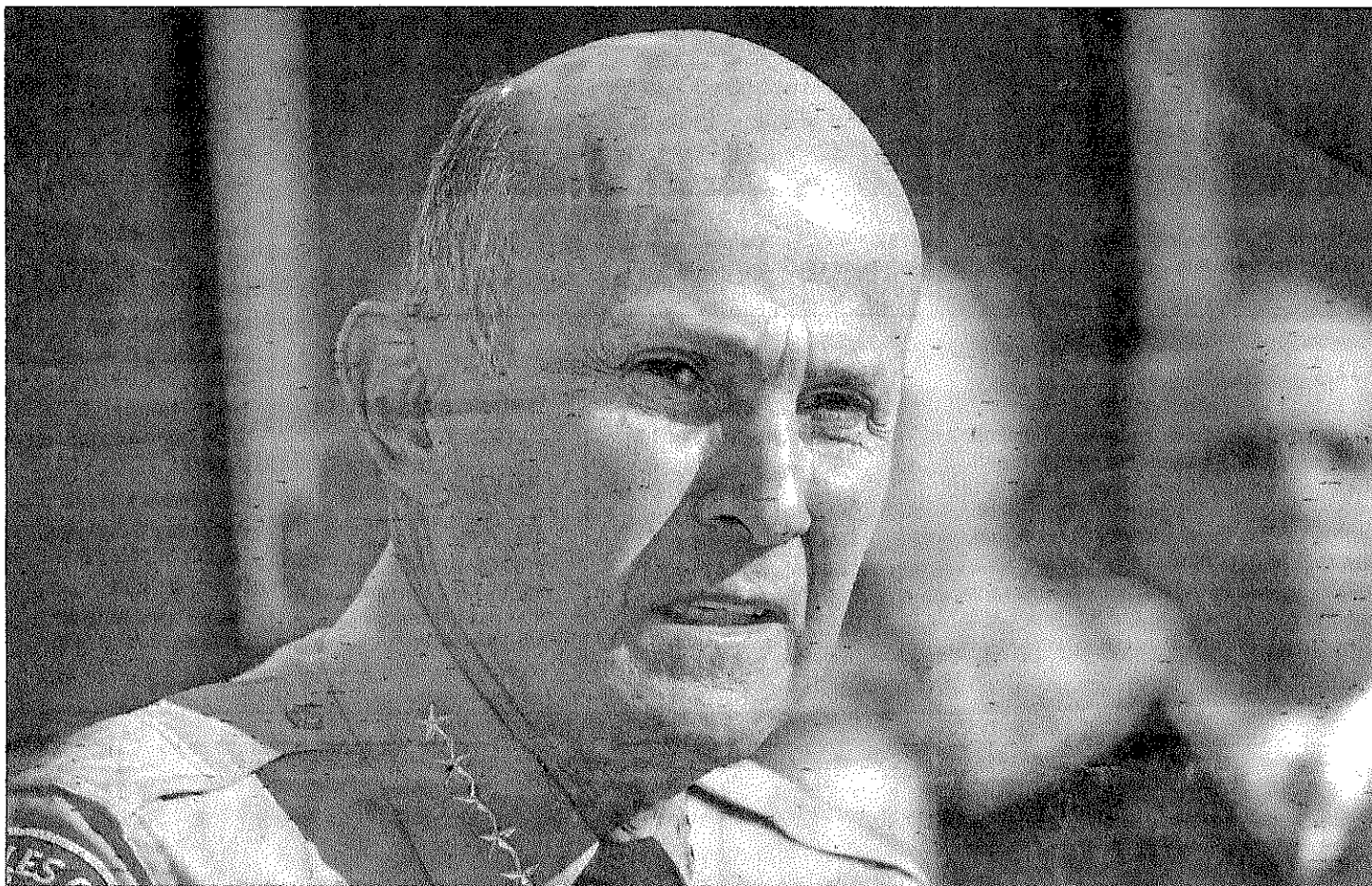
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Times staff writer Seema Mehta contributed to this report.

L.A. COUNTY

SHERIFF BACA: I AM THE PAST

RETIREMENT COMES AS SCANDAL PLAGUES DEPARTMENT



LEO JARZOMB — STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca, 71, announces his retirement, effective at the end of the month, during a news conference Tuesday. Under his watch, the department has been mired in allegations of inmate abuse, and 18 current and former deputies have been indicted.

Departure:

Baca says he's leaving to let department move into the future

By Christina Villacorte
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The scandal-plagued Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department is poised to have a new leader for the first time in 15 years, with Sheriff Lee Baca unexpectedly announcing Tuesday he would retire at the end of the month.

"I'll be 72 years old in May, and I don't see myself as the future," Baca said during a news conference at the department's Monterey Park headquarters as his command staff stood behind him.

"I see myself as part of the past," Baca added. "What's more important is to give others inside the Sheriff's Department a chance who, I know, would not take a chance if I were to run again."

Baca abruptly decided not to seek a fifth term just five months before the June 3 election. If none of the candidates receives a vote of 50 percent-plus-one, a runoff would be held Nov. 4 and the winner sworn in Dec. 1.

In the meantime, the county Board
BACA » PAGE 5

SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

WHAT NEEDS TO BE FIXED

CULTURE CHANGE: The new sheriff will contend with what a blue-ribbon commission called a "culture of violence" and other abuses in the county jail system, including alleged corruption and civil rights violations that recently prompted 18 indictments.

LEADERSHIP: Grasping the extent of persistent problems and acting immediately on serious issues that have plagued the department.

ACCOUNTABILITY: Recognizing that some problems may be more prevalent than a few isolated cases and deserve a more systemic approach.

RETHINKING CORRECTIONS: With county jails taking on more inmates, the new sheriff will have to think of new ways to secure and rehabilitate criminals.

Contenders:

Crowded field includes South Bay, Long Beach officials

By Beatriz Valenzuela, Sandy Mazza and Gregory Yee
Staff Writers

Reform-minded candidates eager to step into Sheriff Lee Baca's shoes at the helm of the nation's largest sheriff's department are faced with several major issues that have tarnished the agency's leadership over the past several years.

Specifically, whoever succeeds Baca must deal with the fallout from the indictment of 18 current and former deputies for an array of crimes, a Justice Department investigation in 2013 that found deputies made unconstitutional stops and used excessive force against minorities, and questionable hiring practices that brought deputies with criminal records into the department.

Baca's announcement Tuesday that he would not seek re-election has provided an opening for several can-

CONTENDERS » PAGE 9

MORE SHERIFF BACA
RETIREMENT COVERAGE — A5, 9

Baca

FROM PAGE 1

of Supervisors will need to appoint someone to hold the fort, and Baca has recommended Assistant Sheriff Terri McDonald, who previously served as operations undersecretary at the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

Although Baca said Tuesday he was "leaving on his own terms," he has been battered by criticism in recent years.

The American Civil Liberties Union accused him of condoning "savage beatings" of inmates, and the blue ribbon Commission on Jail Violence concurred there had been a "failure of leadership" over the jails.

In July, the U.S. Department of Justice threatened to place his department under a consent decree for alleged "discrimination and harassment" of Latinos and blacks in the Antelope Valley.

In December, the FBI arrested 18 of his deputies, sergeants and lieutenants for alleged civil rights abuses, corruption and even obstruction of justice — including threatening an FBI agent at her home and hiding an FBI informant.

Baca acknowledged the criticism has taken a toll on the department, and he does not want it to be damaged when rivals target him.

"I didn't want to enter a campaign that would be full of contentious, negative politicking," he said. "There has to be another future for the Sheriff's Department."

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky hailed Baca's decision, even though he doubted it would completely silence critics.

"I don't think it'll cause them to back off, but the criticism will be focused more on the merits of the issues, and not personalized in the context of a political campaign," Yaroslavsky said.

ACLU of Southern California legal director Peter Eliasberg said he has been urging Baca to step down for years.

"The list of problems that have repeatedly come to light range from abuse and mismanagement at the jails, mistreatment of inmates with mental illness, racial and discriminatory policing, and excessive force and lack of accountability, plus all of the stories about the hiring issues," he said. "It just keeps piling up."

In a statement, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles spokesman Jorge-Mario Cabrera said Baca "will not be missed" because his policies led to thousands of deportations.

Ironically, Baca comes from a family of immigrants from Michoacan. He grew up in poverty in East Los Angeles, raised mainly by his grandmother. He had a brief stint as a Marine before joining the Sheriff's Department in 1965.

In 1998, he challenged his mentor, the incumbent Sherman Block, and took office when Block died days before the election.

Service praised

The first half of his 15-year tenure drew praise.

"He was good in a lot of different areas, including community policing, being a reform agent,

"But you can't ignore the fact that the jails have experienced great constitutional policing problems, and that happened on his watch."

— Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

agreeing to a certain amount of oversight," said Jaime Regalado, emeritus professor of political science at Cal State L.A.

Aside from bringing crime rates to 40-year lows, Baca was hailed for his unconventional tactics that included proposing, at one time, even having the Sheriff's Department build a homeless shelter in downtown L.A.

His pioneering Education-Based Incarceration Program has allowed 8,500 inmates to take classes while in jail so they can acquire diplomas, job training, even anger management and parenting skills.

"He has been a compassionate sheriff, one who established unprecedented access between previously marginalized communities and the Sheriff's Department," Yaroslavsky said. "He brought a humanism to the job that most people in that position across the country would not bring."

"But you can't ignore the fact that the jails have experienced great constitutional policing problems, and that happened on his watch," Yaroslavsky added.

Supervisor Don Knabe said the problems in recent years have "cast a cloud" over the work of the Sheriff's Department. He said Baca's decision to step down would "keep the momentum for reform moving forward."

The FBI has said it is continuing to investigate alleged wrongdoing within the department, but spokeswoman Laura Eimiller refused to say whether the sheriff himself would be swept up in it.

"Because it's an open investigation, I can't rule out any further indictments but I wouldn't

be in a position to speculate about that," she said. "Obviously, the sheriff's retirement is completely independent of our investigation."

Two of the candidates for sheriff have hinted the abuses investigated by the FBI could be traced back to Baca. It was Bob Olmsted, retired sheriff's commander who invited the FBI to look into Men's Central Jail. And Paul Tanaka, former undersheriff, who claimed Baca ordered the concealment of the FBI informant.

Baca, however, shrugged off concerns over the FBI.

"You don't become a deputy sheriff if you're afraid," he said. "I'm not afraid of reality. I'm only afraid of people that don't tell the truth."

Nevertheless, Los Angeles Police Chief Charlie Beck said Baca, a friend, privately told him, "all the fury and fire surrounding him has caused his department to be impeded from doing its job, and that's why he stepped aside."

"He's a great man and he'll be known as a great sheriff, mark my words, but that is an extremely difficult job and nobody should have to do it forever," Beck added. "I think people will have to recognize this as an opportunity for new leadership."

Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti appreciated Baca making way for new leadership, and he expressed hope it would be "somebody who can partner with our Police Department, ensures the region is unified on homeland security, is a reformer, and can make sure the constitution is respected and that individual rights are respected at every level of the criminal justice system."

The next sheriff would have the burden of finishing all of the reforms recommended by the Commission on Jail Violence. Baca has carried out many of the changes, but some still require millions in additional funding to implement.

There's also Public Safety Realignment, Gov. Jerry Brown's strategy for carrying out a Supreme Court mandate to reduce the overcrowding in state prisons to diverting inmates to counties. Baca has been forced to think of new ways to manage that population, including resorting to increased reliance on GPS-monitoring ankle bracelets.

The new sheriff would oversee the ongoing renovation of the Hall of Justice in downtown Los Angeles, which has been abandoned for years due to earthquake damage. Baca was the one who pushed for years to bring the Sheriff's Department back to its historical home but, ironically, he will not be part of the move.

Like many retirees, Baca said he plans to shower attention on his grandchildren.

"It's one hell of a title to be called Grandpa," he said with a smile. "You've got to take care of those responsibilities."

HISTORY SHERIFFS OF L.A. COUNTY

Leroy D. Baca: 1998–2014
Sherman Block: 1982–1998
Peter J. Pitchess: 1959–1982
Eugene W. Biscalluz: 1932–1958
William I. Traeger: 1921–1932
John C. Cline: 1915–1921
William A. Hammel: 1907–1914
Will A. White: 1903–1906
William A. Hammel: 1899–1902
John Burr: 1895–1898
John C. Cline: 1893–1894
E.D. Gibson: 1890–1892
Martin G. Aguirre: 1889–1890
James C. Kays: 1887–1888
George E. Gard: 1885–1886
Alvan T. Currier: 1883–1884
William R. Rowland: 1880–1882
H.M. Mitchell: 1878–1879
David W. Alexander: 1876–1877
William R. Rowland: 1871–1875
James F. Burns: 1868–1871
Tomas Avila Sanchez: 1860–1867
James P. Thompson: 1858–1859
William C. Getman: 1858
Elijah Bettis: 1857
James R. Barton: 1856
C.E. Hale: 1856
David W. Alexander: 1856
James R. Barton: 1852–1855
George T. Burrill: 1850–1851
Source: L.A. County sheriff's staff

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Supes to select interim sheriff

By Rick Orlov

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With Sheriff Lee Baca's sudden retirement after 15 years as the county's chief law enforcement officer, attention turned to the upcoming election for the post as well as who the Board of Supervisors will appoint as an interim sheriff.

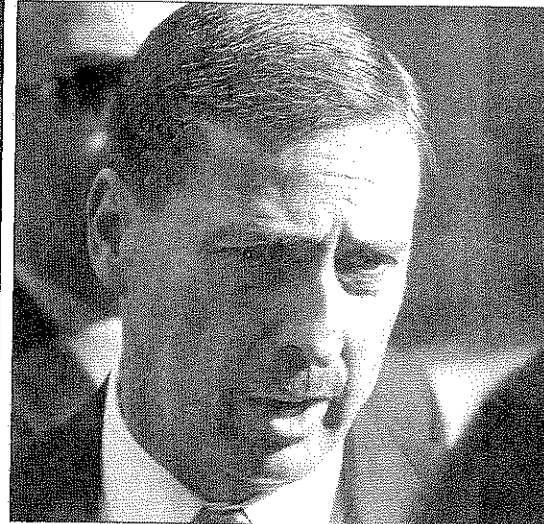
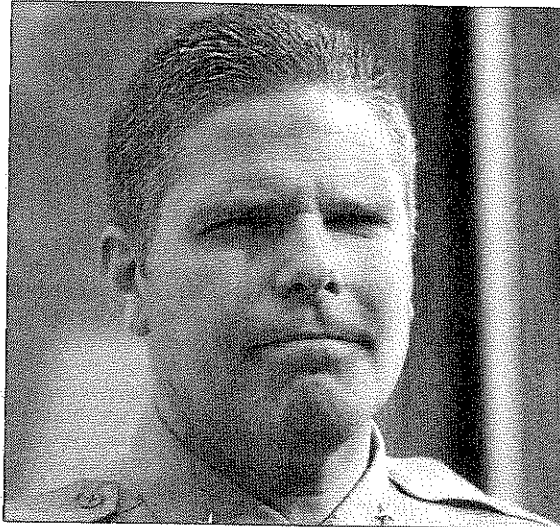
Baca, who announced his resignation at a news conference Tuesday, said he would like to see one of his top aides, Asst. Sheriff Terri McDonald, named as interim sheriff, but it will be up to the supervisors to determine who to select.

Board members held a closed-door meeting about Baca's decision but said they wanted additional time to explore their options.

There is no immediate rush to make a decision since Baca said he would stay on through the end of the month and the department has a command structure in place to make sure it is operating in times when Baca was not available.

Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said board members do not feel a need to make an immediate decision, but they do want to have one person in charge after Baca leaves.

"My preference would be that we not name someone who is running for the job," Yaroslavsky said.



STAFF FILE PHOTOS

Assistant Sheriffs James Hellmold, left, and Todd Rogers could be in line for the interim sheriff's job. Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky said he would prefer to see the interim job go to someone in the department for the sake of continuity.

"We want to make sure we have some stability and allow the next sheriff to make the reforms he believes are needed."

— Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky

"There is too much to do as sheriff to allow a campaign to get in the way."

At the same time, he said he would prefer to see the interim job go to someone in the department for the sake of continuity.

"We want to make sure we have

some stability and allow the next sheriff to make the reforms he believes are needed," Yaroslavsky said.

Merrick Bobb, special counsel to the department on use of force incidents, said he was caught by surprise by Baca's decision.

"He is a good man and his heart is in the right place," Bobb said. "What's sad is he was really a very progressive voice in law enforcement circles and spoke out about the under-represented and under-represented in society."

Bobb said he hopes the Board of Supervisors acts quickly on an interim sheriff to provide stability and continuity to the organization.

"If you bring in an outsider as interim sheriff, unless it was someone who worked here before, it is going to take them six months to get up to speed."

Democratic political consultant Bill Carrick, who is not representing anyone in the campaign, called the Baca decision a "huge game-changer" and leaves the June 3rd race open.

"I think this will put people in the race who earlier didn't want to go up against Baca," Carrick said. "It's a very tough race because you need to have a law enforcement background, the county is so large and it will be very difficult to get known among voters."

Given the problems and scandals of the past year, Carrick said he believed someone from outside the department would stand the best chance of changing the agency.

"Historically, the Sheriff's Department has always had insiders coming up through the department," Carrick said. "And, while that has served the department well, now might be the time to bring in someone like the LAPD did with Bill Bratton (the former L.A. police chief) to change the culture of the agency."

Sheriff Lee Baca leaves a mixed legacy

By Brenda Gazzar

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Los Angeles County Sheriff Lee Baca will leave a mixed legacy when he abruptly retires at the end of the month without completing his fourth term of office.

Even though Baca was recently honored as the nation's Sheriff of the Year, his department has also faced a slew of federal corruption charges, allegations of mismanagement and claims of giving certain individuals special treatment over the years.

"Lee Baca has not been a shrinking violet throughout his career," said Tom Hogen-Esch, a political science professor at California State Northridge. "He's been very front and center, not someone to back down from controversy, someone who in some cases sought out controversy, and I think it suggests to me that the 18 indictments which were laid down by the U.S. attorney, Andre Birotte (Jr.), may just be the beginning."

The latest scandal to rock the department culminated last month with federal indictments of 18 deputies, sergeants and lieutenants who were charged with civil rights violations and other crimes, including beating inmates and their visitors, putting handcuffs on an Austrian consular official without justification and hiding an FBI informant.

In most cases involving persistent problems in the jails, Hogen-Esch argued that Baca has either denied them or minimized their significance, blaming it on just "a few bad apples."

"He's done that throughout his career either through himself or his spokespeople," Hogen-Esch said. "I don't think he's taken a lot of the issues as seriously as he's needed to — or to rebuild public confidence."

That sentiment was echoed by Peter Eliasberg, legal director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Southern California, who said Baca's general response to past criticism has been either ignore it or deny it.

"There has been a long pattern of refusal from the sheriff and the department to own up to the scope of its responsibilities," Eliasberg said.

ACLU officials had called for Baca to step down since 2011 with the release of its report on jail conditions called "Cruel and Usual Punishment." The organization filed a class-action lawsuit in early 2012 against Baca, accusing him of condoning a pattern of deputies using excessive force on inmates.

Later that year, the Citizens' Commission on Jail Violence criticized his "failure of leadership," saying he "did not pay attention to the jails."

But civil rights attorney Connie Rice, who has sued the Sheriff's Department in the past and worked with Baca to help implement reforms, says

Baca has been "forthright" in facing the problems in the jails and made a wise choice in hiring Terri McDonald, a veteran of the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, as the new assistant sheriff for custody.

"I think it has taken him too long to come to grips with a number of problems but when he does, he comes up with the right solutions," Rice said. "McDonald is fabulous. We (just) needed her four years ago."

Steve Whitmore, a longtime spokesman for Baca and the Sheriff's Department, argued the sheriff has a "head-on, direct" approach to problems, including the creation of a use-of-force response team, which he said has contributed to use of force in jails being "the lowest (its) ever been."

"If he believes there is a problem, he immediately puts something into place to fix it," said Whitmore, who has worked with Baca for 14 years.

During Baca's 15-year tenure, the department was also accused of harassing minorities in Lancaster and Palmdale. A federal jury held Baca personally liable for \$100,000 after deputies broke several bones of an inmate during one jail beating. He was also blamed in a 2007 audit for the mismanagement of a project to relocate the headquarters of a special forces bureau, including authorizing \$1 million in payments for work that was done before he obtained the authority to do so.

Baca and his department also came under criticism when reports surfaced that Mel Gibson went on an anti-Semitic tirade during a weekend arrest on suspicion of drunk driving in 2006, and that Baca ordered details of the outburst eliminated from a deputy's report.

But the sheriff, who was named the 2013 Sheriff of The Year by the National Sheriffs' Association, has also received national praise for his department's role in keeping the county's crime rate among the lowest among major metropolitan areas, for reaching out to community religious groups and for his initiatives on providing education programs to jail inmates. He also developed the Office of Independent Review, made up of six civil rights attorneys who provide independent oversight on all internal affairs and internal criminal investigations involving alleged misconduct by department personnel.

"Other than the crime rate being at historical lows, Sheriff Baca gave voice to those who he believed didn't have a voice, whether it be a homeless vet, a mentally ill inmate ... whether it be a gang member, whether it be the president of the United States," Whitmore said. "He cares deeply about people."

Staff Writers Rick Orlov and Christina Villacorte contributed to this report.

BY THE NUMBERS

Facts and figures on the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department

Annual budget: \$2.8 billion

Sworn employees: 9,249

Civilian employees: 7,746

Civilian volunteers: More than 4,300

Reserve deputies: More than 830

Youth Explorers: More than 420

Patrol stations: 23

Patrol area: 3,159 square miles, which is home to 2.9 million residents

Other notes:

Largest sheriff's department in the country

Second-biggest law enforcement agency in the country

Source: Sheriff's Department staff

Wednesday, January 8, 2014 » MORE AT FACEBOOK.COM/DAILYBREE

Editorial

Cleaning up LA Sheriff Baca's mess

Lee Baca's sudden resignation comes as a pleasant surprise. Now, with the old sheriff out of the way, Los Angeles County can get on with choosing new leadership for the nation's largest sheriff's department and cleaning up the scandals in its law-enforcement force and jail staff.

But let's be clear: This cleanup is a huge task. As Baca departs, the culture of violence and corruption that developed in his 15 years in charge remains. It will take both a strong successor and forceful oversight to repair the damage and prevent further abuses of the sort that led, in the most egregious of the department's several scandals in recent years, to the indictments of 18 current and former sheriff's deputies in December following an FBI investigation of jail inmate abuse.

County residents should hope for two things, for starters:

- A vigorous, forward-looking campaign for sheriff before the June election, ideally with more candidates jumping in.

- Permanent civilian oversight to play the role the Los Angeles Police Commission did in molding the modern LAPD.

Until county residents woke up Tuesday to the news that Baca, 71, is quitting at the end of January, it was expected that the 2014 campaign would pit the fourth-term sheriff against two leading opponents, former underlings Paul Tanaka and Bob Olmsted. The focus would have been on Baca's defense of his record and his argument that he's the man to fix what went wrong on his watch.

The chances of this being a constructive debate about the Sheriff's Department's future instead of its past look better with Baca out of the way. So do the chances of more candidates joining the race; efforts were under way Tuesday to persuade Long Beach Police Chief Jim McDonnell, a former

second-in-command to LAPD Chief William Bratton, to reconsider his decision not to run for sheriff.

The likelihood of the L.A. County Board of Supervisors creating a civilian oversight commission for the Sheriff's Department may have received a boost from, ironically, Baca. Monday, hours before the news of his resignation, Baca told supervisors he supports the proposal for a permanent panel, a turnabout from his previous resistance to the idea.

Last month the supervisors appointed public-corruption prosecutor Max Huntsman as an inspector general for the Sheriff's Department. That's a good first step, but only a first step, in imposing the oversight the agency needs.

Baca told reporters he's stepping down because "I don't see myself as the future, I see myself as part of the past."

It's a past with some bright spots. Major crime in L.A. County fell in Baca's tenure (as it has elsewhere). He has been innovative in emphasizing education and job training for jail inmates.

But right now Baca's legacy is months of news reports, investigations and lawsuits containing charges of inmate abuse and corruption cover-ups in the jails; deputies harassing minorities in the Antelope Valley, and highly questionable hiring practices.

There's a lot to put right. It will require a strong new man or woman leading the department's 18,000-member force, and vigilant citizens watching over them all.

L.A. COUNTY SHERIFF

New report logs deputy misconduct

By Christina Villacorte

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Deputies accused of rape, smuggling heroin into a lockup, stealing money from a narcotics bust, smuggling undocumented immigrants and even using a Los Angeles Sheriff's Department helicopter for unofficial business.

This was just some of the misconduct investigated — and corroborated — by the Office of Independent Review in a recently issued report.

The OIR, a civilian oversight body created by the county Board of Supervisors, is tasked with making sure the LASD's internal affairs investigations are thorough and effective, and the recommended discipline is fair.

The report, posted on the OIR's website, provided summaries of administrative discipline cases resolved through Sept. 30, 2013.

Because of privacy laws, it does not list the identities of the deputies involved or the dates of the misconduct, some of which may have taken place a few years ago.

Assistant Sheriff Todd Rogers expressed concern about the findings.

"When these matters are brought to our attention, we make every effort to investigate them as promptly as possible and take the most appropriate correction action," he said in an email Thursday. "This can include retraining, written reprimands, suspensions, demotions, and even discharge."

Rogers added accountability must be ensured "from the sheriff to the most junior supervisor."

"All of us have an absolute obligation to conduct ourselves in a manner that is above reproach and demand the same of those who work within our chains of command," he said. "As supervisors, we must do everything in our power to ensure that our personnel do not engage in conduct that violates the public trust, damages the reputation of the department, or causes irreparable harm to their careers."

Mike Gennaco, who heads the OIR, said recently en-

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acted reforms at the LASD do not seem to have made a significant dent in the volume of misconduct, except when it comes to excessive use of force in the jails.

"Unfortunately, the cases are probably the same as far as level of egregiousness," he said in an interview Thursday.

"With regard to jail cases, I know that force is going down, at least in the downtown jails," he added. "The fact that there are cameras make it easier to decide whether the conduct was in or out of policy."

Among the most serious cases catalogued by the OIR:

- The District Attorney filed 11 felony counts ranging from bribery to rape against a deputy accused of sexually assaulting a woman during a traffic stop, in exchange for not arresting her for driving on a suspended license, and of making similar offers to other women;

- A deputy arrested by Border Patrol was ultimately convicted of felony alien smuggling. He resigned from the LASD while his criminal case was still pending;

- An LASD employee pleaded guilty to felony spousal assault and cruelty to a child after assaulting his live-in girlfriend and her children;

- A deputy tried to bring heroin inside a burrito into the court lockup and deliver it to an inmate;

- A deputy left her gun in a backpack in the backseat of her private vehicle and then offered two youths a ride to their bus stop, one of whom mistakenly took her backpack to school instead of his own;

- An LASD employee was suspended after being accused of unauthorized use of helicopter for non-official business flights and falsification of time records;

- A sergeant and a station clerk pleaded no contest to grand theft after stealing money from the proceeds of narcotics investigations;

- A deputy was arrested and subsequently convicted of kidnapping, falsely imprisoning, and assaulting his ex-girlfriend with a firearm.

- A deputy who utilized the closed circuit monitoring system to inappropriately view women at the court house was discharged because of other unrelated misconduct;

- A nursing assistant with a history of performance issues failed to provide medication to an entire module;

- About a half dozen deputies belonging to a clique — what the American Civil Liberties Union calls a gang — known as the "Jump Out Boys" were discharged. "Elements of this creed, if followed, do not reflect the standards expected of members of the Sheriff's Department and directly contradict our core values," the OIR said.

- A deputy alleged to have had sexual relationships with inmates and prostitutes resigned in lieu of being discharged.

- A deputy left a male inmate and a female inmate unsecured in an adjacent courtroom lockup area. They had sex, and the female inmate became pregnant.